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ABSTRACT

The University of Tennessee--Clinch-Powell student teaching project was a cooperative effort between the College of Education at the university and the Clinch-Powell Educational Cooperative. The project was designed to accomplish three goals: a) meeting the needs of university students who desired to learn about the unique characteristics of rural schools and rural children, b) providing a vehicle by which innovative educational programs could be initiated, and c) providing competent teachers in rural areas. Participating student and cooperating teachers were volunteers. Student teachers took up residence in the area where their school was located. Cooperating teachers participated in supervision classes and workshops during the project. Reaction to the project was assessed through the positive feedback from student and cooperating teachers and from pupils. Results of the project included the initiation of innovative programs in the schools and the employment of student teachers in rural districts after completion of the project. (Author/BRB)

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ABSTRACT

University of Tennessee--Clinch-Powell Student Teaching Project

The University of Tennessee-Clinch-Powell student teaching project is a cooperative effort between the College of Education, University of Tennessee-Knoxville and the Clinch-Powell Educational Cooperative to accomplish three goals: (1) To meet the needs of university students who desire to learn about the unique characteristics of rural schools and rural children, (2) To provide a vehicle by means of which the College of Education might carry innovations in education to a region which has been out of the mainstream, and (3) To provide a pool of teaching talent for the area from outside the Clinch-Powell area.

Participants in the program are all volunteers. The cooperating teachers have to express a desire to work with a student teacher and to participate in a course in student teaching supervision. The student teachers likewise volunteer to move into the valleys and complete their practicum.

School sites selected for participation in the program are among the most isolated in the United States. Most are one and two-teacher schools situated far up remote valleys of the Cumberland Range of the Appalachian Mountains. Many are heated by coal or wood burning pot-bellied stoves and have only privies for toilets. They are a far cry from what most of the student teachers have attended as youngsters.

The student teaching experience is far from conventional. There is no "orientation period." From the outset, student teachers are immersed in work. They discover that there are no "planning periods." Teachers work constantly from the time they arrive until they drag themselves home in the evening. The student teachers find that they cannot be merely teachers of mathematics, science, or English. They find it necessary to become teachers of all subjects. They have to be "teachers," not subject area specialists.

Results of the program are encouraging and sometimes surprising. Most of the student teachers emerge enthusiastic about their experiences. The cooperating teachers have revealed new interests in their work, some even demanding to be video taped on a continuing basis for purposes of self improvement. Several of the school systems have kept student teachers on as staff members. There is increased interest throughout the region for greater educational input from the outside.

Perhaps one of the most surprising results comes in the form of changed attitudes of the student teachers. Some have gone to "help the poor, backward people of Appalachia." After spending some time in the mountains, they have discovered the youngsters to be creative, eager, and independent. The project has, indeed, been an educational experience for all participants.

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University of Tennessee--Clinch-Powell

Student Teaching Project

In the Fall of 1971, student teaching went "over the hill" at the University of Tennessee - Knoxville as fourteen UT seniors in the College of Education fulfilled the student teaching requirement of their teacher preparation program in remote schools of Claiborne, Campbell, Hancock, and Union Counties in Northern Tennessee. The schools, located in valleys nestled in the Appalachian mountains, are among the most isolated in the United States.

The plan to present student teachers with the opportunity to student teach in rural Appalachia was a joint effort between the Clinch-Powell Educational Cooperative and the College of Education of the University of Tennessee. The Clinch-Powell Cooperative provided the necessary groundwork to get the project started. The University provided the student teachers and supervisory and teaching personnel. The total endeavor proved to be an example of the extraordinary things that can happen when there is real cooperation between an educational cooperative and a university.

THE RATIONALE

The Clinch-Powell Cooperative and the University of Tennessee had three primary objectives in establishing the program. One was to meet the needs of university students who desired to learn more about the unique characteristics of rural schools and rural children. A second objective was to provide

a vehicle by means of which the College of Education might carry innovations in education to a region which has been out of the educational mainstream. The third objective was to provide a pool of potential teaching talent for the area made up of people from outside the four counties exposing youngsters to teachers with different kinds of experiences and ideas than those that can be accumulated in the valleys.

SELECTION OF PARTICIPANTS

All volunteers, the student teachers were from diverse environments. Of the fourteen who taught Fall quarter and eighteen Winter quarter, half were from Tennessee and the other sixteen were from Alabama, Delaware, Florida, Illinois, Maryland, Michigan, New Jersey, New York, North Carolina, Pennsylvania, and Wisconsin. Few of the students had ever been in the four county area, but nearly all expressed a zealous desire to student teach there.

The cooperating teachers participating in the program were also volunteers responding to a request by the Educational Cooperative for teachers in very small schools who were willing to work with student teachers and who were willing to enroll in a three quarter hour course in student teaching supervision sponsored by the University of Tennessee. There were more volunteer cooperating teachers than were student teachers. In matching student teachers with cooperating teachers, priority was given to teachers in one to four room schools.

THE PLAN IN OPERATION

Immediately upon entering the classrooms, the student teachers discovered that there would be no "orientation period," but that they would begin work immediately under the steady influence of the cooperating teachers. Though they had specialized in particular subject areas in their preparation, they found that in a classroom where there were children from ages ten to thirteen, or six to thirteen in one-teacher schools, one was not just a teacher of mathematics or social studies; one was whatever one had to be to meet the children's needs at that time. The student teachers also found that there were no teachers' lounges in which to retreat. Merely showing up in the morning meant full commitment until the school buses arrived at 3:30 or 4:00. Total involvement in the school program during school hours meant spending extra time after school with the cooperating teacher evaluating work done and planning work to be done.

In addition to meeting the rigors of the classroom, the student teachers had other obligations to meet. A daily log was kept by each student teacher to provide feedback to the University Coordinator on the progress of each student teacher. Lesson plans stated in behavioral terms were prepared a week in advance for the perusal of the coordinator and cooperating teacher. Seminars were held in schools to deal with specific problems and all-day workshops were developed to instruct in teaching strategies such as classroom management, discipline, higher order questioning, teacher evaluation, etc. The student teachers were also expected to plan visits to other schools

during the quarter to give them additional insight into differing school programs and teaching styles.

The cooperating teachers found themselves heavily involved, too. In addition to working with the student teachers, they met as a group for three hours one evening each week in a supervision course. They examined the objectives and policies of the student teaching program, the roles and responsibilities of all participants, the process of developing educational objectives, planning teaching strategies, analyzing teacher and pupil classroom behavior, and effective supervisory practices. These classes and workshops were conducted by various members of the University of Tennessee College of Education staff including the Associate Dean, the Director of Student Teaching, the UT--Clinch-Powell Student Teaching Coordinator, and other specialists and by guest speakers from other universities who were experts in specific areas such as classroom verbal reaction.

FUNDING

The project is funded jointly by the College of Education and the Clinch-Powell Cooperative, each contributing approximately one-half of the total support. The Cooperative also supports the project with media equipment, including video tape recorders, and with personnel for specific jobs.

RESULTS OF THE PROGRAM

Two problems arose, but were not serious to a degree which made them significantly detrimental to the project's success. The scarcity of apartment buildings in rural Tennessee made it difficult for student teachers to obtain sufficient housing. Fortunately, the families in the area opened up their homes to the students and the problem was eventually solved with ten of the thirty-two student teachers living with their co-operating teachers, four of them actually being provided with free room and board.

The second problem involved the difficulty some of the student teachers had in adjusting to a role which they had not anticipated playing. It was apparent from the beginning that a few of the student teachers had volunteered in order to "help the poor, backward people of Appalachia." These few were going to serve rather than to learn, and their preconceived notions of the area and the people were eventually to be realized as disadvantages to them. There is no way to determine the causes for the changes that took place in these young people. Whether the reasons centered on changes within them as they developed more accurate perceptions of themselves as teachers or on merely a better understanding of the people in whose midst they were working is not known. But change they did. The idea that they were different young people after their student teaching experience is reflected by some of their own comments which follow:

Teaching in a rural school in Appalachia is an uncommonly romantic dream to a person with idealistic notions. But the reality of the situation is totally different; hardships and wariness turn up in all areas. They are completely cancelled out, however, by the kindness, eagerness, and above all, the humor of the children and their region. Student teaching here demands an extra shot of patience, but brings an inner glow of satisfaction.

Meg Zanolli
Maynardville Elementary School

I thought Appalachia was super-poverty and though I have encountered some of what I expected, most of those families live better than I expected. I expected the people to have a hard time accepting me, but everyone was immediately helpful and open. What is worse, I didn't think that the kids would or even could learn much due to their "deprived" backgrounds. Instead, I found just the opposite: questions galore, fantastic uncalled-for answers, and an eagerness to participate.

Sally Oakes
Forge Ridge Elementary

I had expected to find in this Appalachian section children who were shy, extremely backward, and deprived of the basic necessities of life. Instead, the children are creative, independent, and responsible. Although many lacked the "basic necessities," their creativity gave them more. Demory School, Mr. Morton, and the students have assisted in making this one of the most satisfactory experiences that I think any student teacher could experience in one quarter. Responsibility for preparing all phases of instruction for 7th and 8th grades have made me pull from resources within and without the old image I had of me.

Emily Langhans
Demory Elementary School

I believe the experience of student teaching in the Appalachian region has certainly been a richer experience for me than if I had been placed in any other region. I can say this truthfully for many reasons, but probably the best one would be the attitude the Appalachian people have. These people have an excitement about learning that only needs to be triggered by good old-fashioned love and attention. They truly touch the

hearts of those they are around. I can't find the words to express my feeling, but this region is a beautiful experience.

Jan Tyler
Wynn High School

Additional results were in the form of positive feedback from cooperating teachers and the children themselves. Millie Boshears, a second grader in one of the mountain schools said about student teachers, "I like them and they are good to us. Student Teachers are good. They let us color and paint. I like them to learn from us. They help us learn, too."

Sandra Fugate, the cooperating teacher at Sycamore Hall Elementary School in Claiborne County said of her student teacher:

There she was with her long, curly, shag haircut, maxi-coat, and mini-skirt--a typical-looking college co-ed. I knew from our first meeting that my class was in for a new experience--what kind I wasn't sure. For the very first time in the history of our rural two-roomed school, we would have a student teacher in our midst.

It wasn't long until I recognized that Carol was flexible and had an easy going personality to which the students soon responded freely. But how much Carol had to offer in given teaching-learning situations was my big question. I eagerly awaited an answer. After all, our school and students were certainly atypical to the city schools where she had received her formal education.

By the end of the first week Carol had begun breaking the ice in the combined sixth and seventh grade geography classes she was working with. I felt that she should be capable of handling more than one subject, so I asked her to organize a reading program for the four grades. Within a couple of weeks she had divided the class into four reading groups and had already stimulated an amazing amount of enthusiasm. This came as a surprise to me since I admittedly had not been so successful with the slow readers.

Gradually I began to realize how much more time I had to devote to other subjects. And I did not have to feel guilty

> about being unable to give certain subjects adequate preparation and presentation. There just hadn't been enough hours in the day! For the same reason I had not been able to give the individual instruction that was needed by many of my students. These are all areas in which my student teacher has been of great benefit.
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> I, as well as my class, have profited by the new methods in teaching along with teaching materials (unattainable to us!) that Carol has introduced to us. For instance, she has spent much time and thought in individualizing the reading program far beyond small group instruction. She has tried to learn the abilities and interests of each student and has brought books just especially for each child; these include high interest, low vocabulary books that we are unable to order from our circulating library. Her approach to reading has really made a difference.
>
> My question was answered some time before Carol's tenure was up. I would like to add that I feel that Carol's presence--her mode of dress and even thinking along with previous experiences--have been advantageous to our students who in almost 100 per cent of the cases rarely leave their farm homes and large families or travel outside the county. I am so impressed with the student teaching program that I am looking forward to having two student teachers in our school next quarter.[1]

Another result of the program was an increased demand for the program among University students preparing to student teach and greater eagerness on the part of school people and citizens of the Clinch-Powell area to participate in the program. Evidently mutual trust had been a positive side effect of the program.

But of all the results to come from the program, two in particular were the most promising. First, two of the student teachers remained in the area as permanent staff members, one as a country-wide reading teacher and the

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[1]Sandra Fugate, "The One Who Made the Difference," Tennessee Teacher, Volume XXXIX (May, 1972), 14.

other as the only teacher in a one-teacher school. Two others were asked to remain and were approved by superintendents, but a county shortage of funds prevented the completion of their contracts. Three different school systems were involved in hiring student teachers, revealing that there was indeed a broad base of acceptance for the program in the schools and in the communities.

Second, there is increased activity among the participating schools to examine what is going on in the classrooms and to make innovations based on the examinations. A new sense of awareness is pervading the schools where the program had its inception. The teachers are asking, sometimes even demanding, to be video-taped and to have the tapes reviewed by the University Coordinator. The Classroom Verbal Reaction Behavior Log[2] is in use in several classrooms. Efforts are being made to individualize instruction to a greater degree and everywhere there is a new openness in terms of the desire to be observed and assisted.

The results do not constitute a revolution. The changes are minute and they are subtle, but they are there. At the time of this writing, there is no assurance that the project is an unqualified breakthrough. There is not even assurance that the program can continue with its present structure. There is only one thing of which we may be assured: an Educational Cooperative and a University can join hands to develop projects for the improvement of education for boys and girls.

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[2]Gordon M. A. Mork, REVISITING BASIC ISSUES IN ENGLISH EDUCATION. Sixth conference on English Education of the National Council of Teachers of English. Champaign, Illinois. 1968.